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DAILY 49ER
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH
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COLUMN

Social workers: Don't burn out

ARIANA SAWYER
Opinions Editor

In the last seven years, Jessire Ramos has removed over 100 children from their homes as a Child Protective Services (CPS) employee.

It has become routine for her to take other people's children — to hold them tightly in her arms, running from a house while the police sweep in behind her, the parents yelling obscenities.

"There will come a time when the stuff will get at you, and you will sit at your desk and cry like a little baby. Everyone does this. If you can't get back up and do your job, you don't belong here," she tells all of her new trainees.

It is difficult to imagine Jessire training anyone when she looks so youthful. In the photo on her CPS badge, her smile is wide. Her head is cocked to the side, demurring and sweet. Her hair is long and dark. She looks wholesome, but she has also been known to frequent the bar, drawing uncomfortable stares by the other patrons who don't get her morbid jokes.

"People mostly view us as evil baby snatchers," Jessire says flatly.

CPS workers cannot remove children arbitrarily. They need to have a court order, for which they must have gotten a tip that there's abuse or neglect happening. Sometimes the allegations come from a teacher, a neighbor or even a family member. Many times, the call is a lie from an ex-lover as blackmail or to get revenge.

See **SOCIAL WORK**, Page 8

MICHAEL ARES | DAILY 49ER

CRIME BRIEF

POLICE ORDER NON-STUDENT OFF CAMPUS

On Tuesday evening, a man was escorted from the library for trespassing, according to Corporal Virgel Munoz from the California State University, Long Beach police department. Munoz said the man was roaming the campus near the Liberal Arts 1 building and the library. Munoz said the man is not a student and had been banned from the campus previously in 2013.

"[He] was walking around calling all the girls 'b-tches' and screaming profanities," said Emmanuel Soriano, a senior linguistics major who was in the library at the time of the incident.

Munoz said the man was harassing two women. The two women called the CSULB police, Munoz said. He said the man was not under any influence.

-Amy Patton, News Editor

SPORTS

MICHAEL ARES | DAILY 49ER

Long Beach State guard Tyler Lamb dribbles the ball against a Cal State Fullerton defender at the Big West Tournament. on Mar. 13, 2013.

Restoring order

The 49ers caught a glimpse of the teams they have to beat in order to retake the Big West Conference.

BY OSCAR TERRONES
Sports Editor

Four games have proven enough for the Long Beach State men's basketball team to gauge its competition in the Big West Conference, one of the best mid-major programs in the country.

Head coach Dan Monson, who has won three Big West Conference titles since 2007, said it's a survive-and-advance league.

"Whoever wins this league has a long ways to go," Monson said. "Nobody is good enough right now to win three games in March. It's going to be whoever improves the most from now until that tournament. We just have to keep working."

The unpredictability of the Big West Conference makes it so tough. Last year, UC Irvine was the Big West Conference regular season champion and the favorite to win league tournament before losing in the second round to the eventual tournament champions, Cal Poly.

UC Santa Barbara, a team many labeled as a preseason favorite to win the Big West Conference, is struggling with a losing record in league play (1-2) and overall (8-9). UC Davis has taken advantage of a weak non-conference schedule to boost its overall record (14-3). But the Aggies are also undefeated in league play (4-0), including an overtime win against LBSU.

This isn't a league that sends many players to the NBA, so players tend to play all four years of college. LBSU senior Point Guard Mike Caffey already knows the type of defenses the team is going to face from this point on.

See **ORDER**, Page 8

News 2 Opinions 4 Diversions 6 Sports 8

NEWS IN BRIEF

CSULB recognized by Carnegie Foundation

By Paige Pelonis
Editor in Chief

One of only 361 recipients, California State University, Long Beach will receive the 2015 Community Engagement Classification from the Carnegie Foundation.

"We are honored that the Carnegie Foundation has recognized Cal State Long Beach with its 2015 Community Engagement Classification," University President Jane Close Conoley said, according to a press release from the CSULB Office of Public Affairs and Media Relations.

According to its interim website, the Carnegie Foundation defines community engagement as "collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity."

"The students, faculty and staff at Cal State Long Beach understand that engagement not only benefits the community, but it helps the university as well," said Juan M. Benitez, the executive director of the Center for Community Engagement at CSULB.

The foundation's interim website indicates that the classification has been given to campuses in 33 states and U.S. territories. The university press release described the classification as an elective classification, meaning that participants must apply for consideration.

Data collection and documentation of the campus' community engagement is required on the application. According to the interim website, institutions that were not chosen for the classification received feedback from the foundation.

CSULB demonstrated its community engagement through programs like the Women in Engineering Outreach Program for female students in grades K-12 and the Health on Wheels Mobile Clinic, according to the press release.

The 2015 distinction for CSULB is a "reclassification" that follows the recognition of the university in 2008 by the foundation.

REPUBLICANS CRITICIZE OBAMA'S STATE OF THE UNION AS PARTISAN

Washington — Lacking the presidential bully pulpit but boasting the largest congressional majority in generations, top Republicans accused President Barack Obama of loading his State of the Union address with partisan priorities instead of demonstrating the leadership needed to move shared priorities like tax reform and trade through Congress.

GOP leaders tapped one of their newest faces to give their official prime-time response to the president's address. Rather than respond directly to the president's speech, though, Sen. Joni Ernst of Iowa began what she called a conversation with the nation about her party's agenda, framing it as aimed at boosting the middle-class families like the one she grew up in.

"We heard the message you sent in November _ loud and clear. And now we're getting to work to change the direction Washington has been taking our country," she said.

Republicans have seemed determined since the election to shake the GOP's image of catering to the nation's wealthy elite. Ernst, calling herself a mother and soldier, recalled that while growing up she had to put plastic bread bags around her one good pair of shoes to keep them dry in the rain. These Americans "have been hurting" in the current economy, but "too often, Washington responded with the same stale mind-set that led to failed policies like Obamacare."

"That's why the new Republican majority you elected started by reforming Congress to make it function again. And now, we're working hard to pass the kind of serious job creation ideas you deserve," Ernst said.

In an unusual three-week buildup to the president's annual address to Congress, the White House had released details of many new proposals. That gave Republicans a head start in developing their response. So the party sought to turn Obama's post-midterm determination to focus on economic fairness against him, saying he was abandoning past pledges of cooperation.

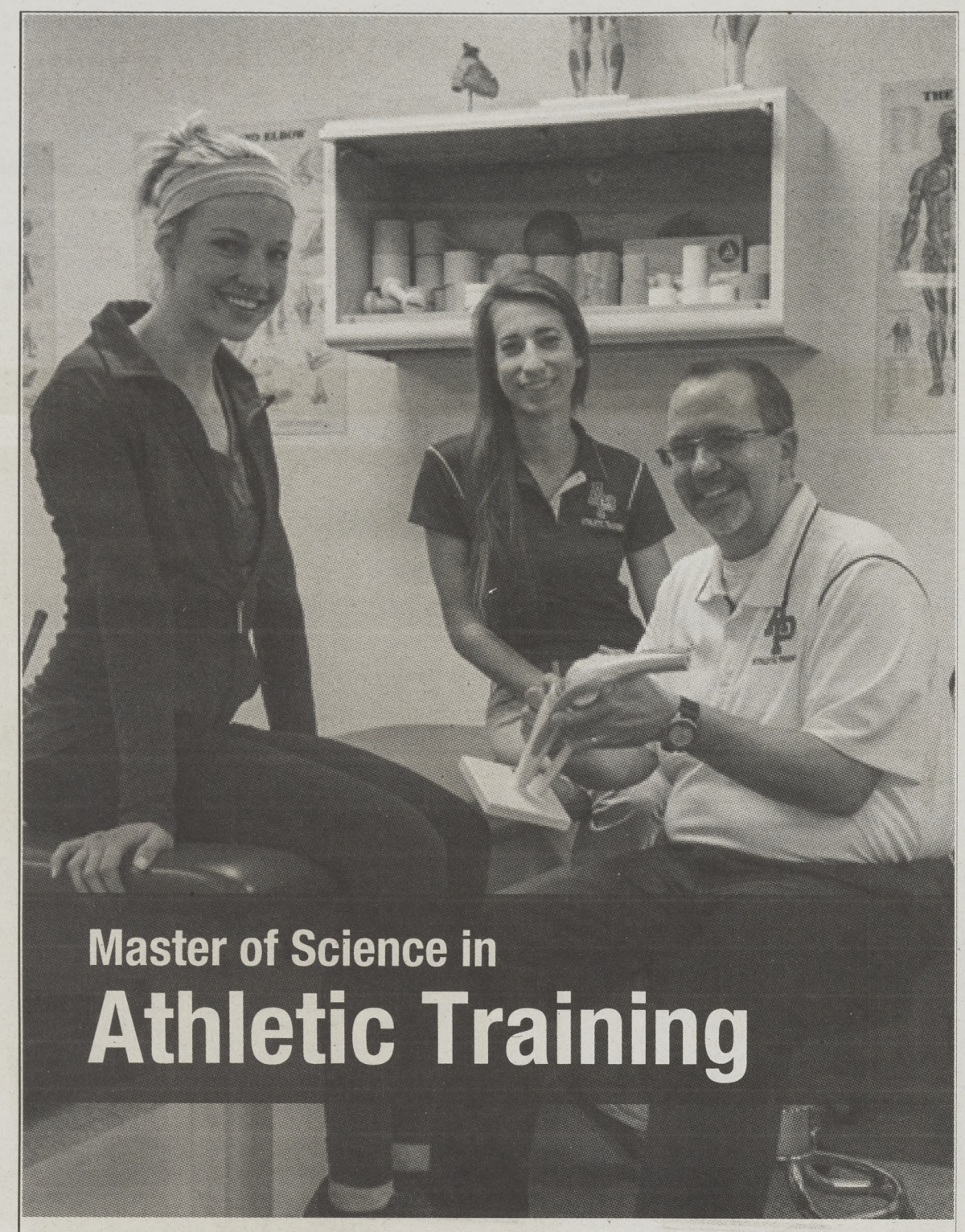
"The American people have spoken," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., told reporters before Obama's speech. "I think they expect us to sort out the things that we can agree on and try to make some bipartisan progress."

But instead, McConnell said, Obama has "indicated he's not for much of anything the American people voted for last November."

"I just say this with all due respect to him. He doesn't set the agenda in the Senate. We're going to try to do the things that we think will make America a better place," he said.

In a morning address to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Orrin G. Hatch, R-Utah, accused the president of advancing a tax plan that Hatch said "appears to be more about redistribution, with added complexity, and class warfare" instead of a serious proposal that could be the starting point for negotiations with the new Congress.

See OBAMA, Page 3



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OBAMA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

"(It) is unfortunate, because we're going to need real leadership from the White House _ not just liberal talking points _ if tax reform is going to be successful," Hatch said.

Rep. Jeb Hensarling, R-Texas, chairman of the Financial Services Committee, also swatted back Obama's tax proposals, particularly a new fee on Wall Street companies, as the kind of policy that will ultimately raise lending costs.

"If President Obama has his way, hundreds of billions of dollars in new taxes will undeniably trickle down on to consumers. They'll face fewer choices, higher costs and less economic freedom," he said.

After Obama announced sweeping new policies to loosen trade and restore relations with Cuba, several Republicans who oppose that approach invited like-minded activists to attend the speech as their guests in the House chamber.

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., said he hopes the presence of Cuban activist Rosa Maria Paya, whose father promoted democracy in Cuba and was killed in a 2012 automobile accident that some have suggested was orchestrated by Cuban officials, will remind Obama of the Havana government's abuses.

House Speaker John A. Boehner invited two other Cuban pro-democracy advocates, Jorge Luis Garcia Perez and Yris Tamara Perez Aguilera.

As in recent years, a prominent conservative political group organized the so-called tea party response to Obama's speech separate from the official Republican response. Rep. Curt Clawson, R-Fla., a relative newcomer and former college basketball player, delivered some of it in Spanish, saying to the Latino community that "the law must be followed," but that "you are all welcome with us."

But, returning to English, he said: "As we respect our immigration laws, we've also got to be fair to the more than 10 million Americans currently struggling to find good jobs.... To do this, we need to secure our borders first."

—Michael A. Memoli and Lisa Mascaro, Tribune Washington Bureau

Courtesy of Terri Carbaugh

From left to right: Kinesiology senior Ryan Ly; Assemblyman Patrick O'Donnel; Sara Pol-Lim, the director of United Cambodian Community; CSULB President Jane Close-Conoley and Simon Kim, the head of CSULB research attend a conference in Sacramento on Tuesday.

California State University, Long Beach senior Kinesiology student of Cambodian descent, Ryan Ly went to Sacramento on Tuesday to dispel stereotypes among the Cambodian community and promote college attendance in the Cambodian community.

"I want to inspire and encourage many people and also help educate those who aren't familiar with the college experience," Ly said.

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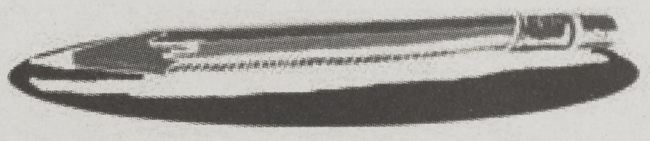

THE FIRST WEEK OF SCHOOL: 10 THINGS NOT TO DO

ARIANA SAWYER
Opinions Editor

1. DITCH CLASS

If you don't show up on your first couple days of class, the professor will likely give your spot to someone else who is begging to add and willing to be there five minutes early.

2. GET TO CAMPUS RIGHT ON TIME

Parking is chaotic, and if you try to roll up five minutes before class begins, you will spend those five minutes plus an additional 25 trying to find a parking space— and that's only if the stars have aligned in your favor.

3. GET LOST

Utilize the Student Orientation, Advising and Registration Lifeguard Stations and the posted maps located all over campus.

4. DRINK ALCOHOL

Well, okay, but at least don't show up hung-over.

5. HAVE ROAD RAGE

The last thing anybody needs is a thorough telling off at 7:30 a.m. for pulling into the spot you thought you saw first. If everyone remains calm, the parking issue will get at least a little better over time.

6. GET INTO AN ARGUMENT WITH YOUR PROFESSOR

Believe it or not, this actually happens. Students tend to be an opinionated bunch, but unless it's a life or death situation, this is absolutely never a good idea in the first week.

7. FORGET TO CHECK BEACHBOARD FREQUENTLY

Professors often begin posting the week before school starts, and they expect you to have read everything. Imagine how pleased they'll be when someone actually does.

8. DRESS UP TOO MUCH

The first week is exciting, but wearing comfortable and breathable clothing can help to reduce stress.

9. WEAR UNCOMFORTABLE SHOES

California State University, Long Beach is a stiletto-breaking, blister-making 5,522,402 square feet.

10. FORGET TO HAVE FUN

Seeing new faces means making new friends. Be sure to frequent the University Student Union, as there are severely fun events taking place.

How do immigrants become Americans?

How do immigrants become Americans?

It goes beyond becoming a citizen, and even formally signing on with the American political creed. The key ingredient is something I know intimately from my own family's experience, namely, gratitude. It is, typically, an immigrant's feelings of gratitude to America for the liberty, security, and opportunity our nation affords him and his family that leads to his appreciation of the ideals and institutions of American cultural, economic, and civic life.

From this appreciation comes an immigrant's belief in the goodness of American ideals and the value of the constitutional structures and institutions by which they are effectuated. And from this belief arises his aspiration to become a citizen together with his willingness to shoulder the responsibilities of citizenship and even to make great sacrifices for the nation _ his nation _ should it come to that.

My own immigrant grandfathers came to the United States a little more than a hundred years ago. Like most immigrants, they were not drawn here by any abstract belief in the superiority of the American political system.

My father's father came from Syria fleeing oppression visited upon him and his family as members of a relatively small ethnic and religious minority group. My mother's father came to escape the poverty of southern Italy. They both worked on the railroads and in the mines. My maternal grandfather settled in West Virginia and saved enough money to start a little grocery store, which became a flourishing business. My paternal grandfather spent his entire life as a laborer. He died of emphysema, no doubt as a result of the pulmonary health hazards of coal mining in those days.

Both men were exceedingly grateful for what America made possible for them and their families. Their gratitude was not diminished when times got hard in the Great Depression. Although both my grandfathers encountered ethnic prejudice, they viewed this as an aberration _ a failure of some Americans to live up to the nation's ideals. It did not dawn on them to blame the bad behavior on America itself. On the contrary, America in their eyes was a land of unsurpassed blessing. It was a nation of which they were proud and happy to become citizens. And even before they became citizens they had become patriots _ men who deeply appreciated what America is and what she stands for.

I suspect that as I tell these stories, many readers are thinking of their grandparents or great-grandparents. The amazing and wonderful thing is that a family story like mine of immigrant ancestors becoming Americans is not the exception; it is the norm. (Of course, the story of Africans brought to America as slaves and then subjected to segregation and discrimination even after slavery was abolished is a radically different one _ a story of injustice and a stain upon our nation's history. Yet the great efforts to right these wrongs and live up to our national ideals of liberty and justice are also part of our heritage.)

I believe that immigration has been a great strength for America and that it will continue to be so. I certainly hope that immigrants will continue to want to be Americans. Does this mean that I reject what is known as "multiculturalism?

It depends. I certainly see no need to encourage immigrants to abandon their customs, traditions, and ethnic or religious identities; on the contrary, I think it is good for families, and good for America, for immigrants to honor their ethnic customs and identities and pass them along to the next generation. Immigrants have always done this, and it is fine and good _ a source of strength. Of course, this is to be distinguished from an ideology that promotes the rejection of a primary and central political allegiance to the United States and its ideals and institutions. And it is certainly to be distinguished from any ideology that denies the fundamental goodness of America's principles of political and civil liberty.

Now, where a culture of opportunity flourishes, immigrants will feel, as my grandparents felt, gratitude for the opportunities they are afforded to lift themselves up, and make a better life for their children, by dint of hard work and determination to succeed. However, it appears to be a brute fact of human psychology that where a culture of entitlement prevails, gratitude even for charitable assistance will not emerge. A culture of entitlement ends up reinforcing an attitude that impedes the gratitude that enables immigrants to become Americans.

As I said, I want immigrants to become Americans. I want them to believe in American ideals and institutions. I want them to "hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, and among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." I want them to believe, as I believe, in the dignity of the human being, in all stages and conditions of life; in limited government, republican democracy, equality of opportunity, morally ordered liberty, private property, economic freedom, and the rule of law. I want them to believe in these ideals and principles not because they are ours, but because they are noble and good and true.

But the transmission of American ideals to immigrants and, indeed, to anyone, including new generations of native-born Americans, depends on the maintenance of a culture in which these ideals flourish. The maintenance of such a culture is a complicated business _ one with many dimensions. But in this democratic nation of immigrants in which "We the People" have the privilege and responsibility of governing ourselves, it is every citizen's business.

And it is certainly the special business of institutions of higher learning. For such institutions, civic education _ education that advances the understanding of our nation's constitutional principles and institutions _ is a high calling and a solemn obligation. If, as James Madison said, "only a well-educated people can be permanently a free people," then civic education is vital to the success of the grand experiment in ordered liberty that Madison and the other founding fathers bequeathed to us and our posterity.

— Robert P. George
The Philadelphia Inquirer

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"Many young social workers and students of social work suffer from what is known as burnout. Burnout is a feeling of impotency that leads to stress and job dissatisfaction, or else 'burnout is just feeling sorry for yourself,' according to Dr. Jo Brocato, a thesis advisor here at California State University, Long Beach. If your dream is to be a Child Protective Services worker, one worker can show you that you shouldn't let the idea of burnout discourage you, because helping others can be so deeply rewarding."

Social Work Majors: Burnout is not inevitable, don't get discouraged

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

There are 28,840 social workers in the state of California, which is more than any other state according to the United States Department of Labor, with nearly half of those workers practicing in Los Angeles, Long Beach and Glendale. Even so, there is a constant demand for more. Each worker can legally have up to 15 cases, where one case is equivalent to one dwelling and can include any number of children. This means that any given CPS worker could be responsible for up to 45 kids, yet have only 30 days to investigate each case.

As more workers become burnt out and quit, the amount of children at risk remains the same. Most workers are forced to exceed the legal case-load limit by supervisors who don't have the resources to hire new staff. The federal government gives less funding to each state's Department of Human Services every successive year, and that's not counting the adjustments for inflation.

An investigation begins with a visit.

"Last Monday I walked into a house and started making a list on a piece of paper. 'I need the dishes done, I need all these clothes picked up, and I'll be back on Wednesday,'" Ramos warns the parents.

If the CPS worker finds that the allegations are true, the children will be removed. However, they prioritize leaving the children with their parents or placing them with a relative, if it's possible.

"If you are trying and you are just being knocked down left and right, I will try to help you. But if you're a piece of shit that cant get off your ass to change a kid's diaper, then I'm going to make you work," Jessire says, as one particular case comes to mind.

She had walked up to the apartment building where three dirty children under the age of ten were playing alone. At the door, a woman with brown skin and dark features got up from the couch, and Jessire introduced herself as a wave of human stench rolled out of the house. The woman sat back down again exhaustedly. Jessire walked in and explained why she was there and what she would do. The woman was passive.

Looking around, she saw a large broken television set against the far wall. A smaller TV sat in front of it, but this one was turned on. Three folding chairs made up the dining room. In the kitchen, dirty dishes with the food half-eaten filled the sink and covered the counters. Bits of food littered the floor.

The boy's shared bedroom was equally sparse, with two mattresses on the floor and plastic tubs in which to store their clothes. The little girl slept with her mother, who also had a mattress on the floor.

Jessire tried to get into the bathroom, but there was so much waste on the floor that the door would not open all the way. The smell was awful and the toilet was stained yellow with urine that had not been cleaned in a long time.

She strode back into the living room where the woman sat in the same place.

"You have to get up."

"I can't get up," the woman said.

"Honey, you have to get up. These kids need you!" Jessire said.

"I just can't get up." The woman was too tired.

"Are you on any medication?" she asked.

The woman showed her seven different bottles of strong psychotropic medications for bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. The woman was overmedicated. She got the woman's sister's phone number and called immediately. Then she called a psychiatrist. Instead of taking the three children into custody, she allowed their aunt to take care of them while the woman got her life back together.

On another day, arriving at the Human Services building, Jessire opens the glass door and walks into the lobby where people are waiting to be seen. She walks through a cloud of body odor and intense stares. She swipes her photo ID badge and keys in her code at the security entrance.

"I work in a hell of endless cubicles," Jessire says. "I walk past 30 cubicles to get to mine. When we want to communicate, we yell at each other over the cubicle walls." She has posted photos of her family and friends, some awards and sarcastic posters. Her desk is covered with files. The drawers are full of files. The cabinets are full of files. Social workers spend more time with files than they do with the kids.

She would sometimes hear a familiar sound and walk over to the two-way mirror, which displays the supervised visitation room.

"I knew he was here because I could hear his cry." She watched mother and son in the small, institutionally gray room, unseen by them.

"I removed him when he was 3 weeks old, just the cutest little white boy with blue eyes. He was a beautiful baby. His parents, well, his dad was a pedophile and his mom didn't want to leave the dad, so we had to remove the baby from both parents. The mom shook him. She always shook him," she recalls.

Jessire cringed every time she saw his mother touch him. "I wanted to rip her head off."

She happened to run into the baby with his new foster family last week. The baby let her hold him without crying.

"He's walking! He looks so good, and it does my heart good. I don't get a lot of positive things to keep me going, so when it happens it lasts a long time."

COURTESY OF JESSIRE RAMOS

Child protective services employee, Jessire Ramos, poses with her daughter Jaylyn Guerin.

GOT AN OPINION?

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MICHAEL ARES | DAILY 49ER

Tag teaming the morning rush

A new online application pilots at the Beach, turning carpooling into companionship.

BY BROOKE BECHER
Diversions Editor

Whether it takes you two hours, an hour or all of five minutes to get to campus, there are no promises on how long you'll spend in limbo before securing a parking spot.

"I came to park at like 12 p.m., and it took me almost half an hour to park," said junior Faith Hundtoft, a double major in German and linguistics. "The parking structures are pretty much useless if you're coming any time 9 a.m."

Tony Butte, a senior nutritionist major, said that he feels like his peers act more like high school students, treating the parking lot like a domain for tailgating,

"Some people sit in the aisle and just wait there, blocking everyone else," Hundtoft said.

A recent graduate from California State University, Fullerton, Dahval Bhatt believes he has the answer to CSULB's parking woes. Bhatt has founded and developed a web application coming to campus Wednesday called My Parking Buddy, giving a new meaning to "friends with benefits."

Bhatt has taken the simple concept of the buddy system, and evolved it from mere uniform lines and kindergarten hand-holding to synchronized routines of swift vehicular spot swapping.

With My Parking Buddy, users notify one another on the application, the arriving student lends a lift in their car to the departing student's currently parked car and the two commit to the switch.

In his sophomore year at CSUF, a vibrant memory sticks with Bhatt—not of blood-boiling exasperation from a driver swooping stolen spots or a maddening headache from the lady who has decided to lay on her horn—but of happiness.

"One day I saw this woman walking to her car," Bhatt said. "There was like ten cars in front of her getting ready to steal her spot, so I asked her if I could drop her off at her car."

After complying with his request and lending him her phone number for future reference, Bhatt had developed more than a new, co-operative relationship, but also his next business venture.

"The moment that happened I felt very happy," Bhatt said. "First of all because I saved time. I felt less stressed. I realized this is what people need."

To get started, the web application requires the user to log in with a student e-mail provided by the school. After that, the user uploads their desired arrival and departure times to a schedule, which uses a series of algorithms to find a compatible match.

A recent feature of My Parking Buddy includes the option to select a carport companion based on their gender. The three options include male, female or random if the user has no preference.

"The gender preference was installed after a girl requested to only be linked to women since she felt more secure," Bhatt said.

Other features like a ranking system, a delete option and messaging between users will be added, Bhatt said. The ranking system is a step toward both safety and serves as healthy competition, Bhatt said, encouraging schools to compete amongst one another for the highest scores.

In 2011 the application began development. By 2012, Bhatt launched the site with 100 percent control of creative concepts and financial liability. It has been previously piloted at CSUF and is undergoing testing on the domain.

In fall of 2015, an iPhone app will be available.

"Eventually, if every student has it, the parking scene will be extremely organized," Bhatt said. "At the moment, cars just come in and go straight to the fourth floor, second floor, third floor. They just don't know where to park."

Although the obvious initiative is to generate efficiency through technology, Bhatt proposes that My Parking Buddy is really to promote selfless acts of kindness. According to myparkingbuddy.com, the tool would "empower students to collaborate, develop interpersonal communication skills and maximize happiness."

"So many possibilities are there when you build a good consistent relationship," Bhatt said. "Good things are bound to happen when people are constantly collaborating."

In addition to that, Bhatt said that his invention would act as a benefactor to universities as it may boost parking permit sales and decrease accident liability.

"Professors will like it a lot—they'll be impressed that [students] will be in class on time."

Bhatt said that he is not worried about safety hazards from the level of intimacy required by the application like hitching a ride because "the school is obligated to provide security like the campus police … It's their duty to create a safe environment."

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"The most beautiful comment was from a woman who had a buddy, and she was never late to class," Bhatt said. "The moment you read something that you created has made a difference in someone's life, it really makes you happy [and] want to pursue it more."

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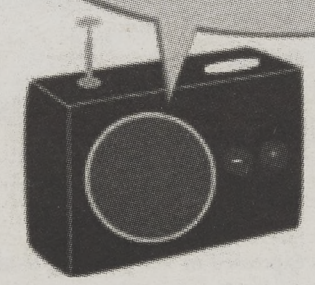

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INDEX (CIRCLE APPROPRIATE CLASSIFICATION)

10. Announcements
11. Organizations
12. Typing
15. Volunteers
18. Insurance
20. Travel
25. Lost
26. Found
27. Legal Services
28. Child Care
30. School & Instruction
31. Internships
32. English Tutoring
33. Tutor Needed
34. Pets
35. Employment Opport.
36. Auditions
39. Jobs Wanted
40. Misc for Sale
41. Computers for Sale
43. Music Lessons
46. Boats
50. Apts./ Houses Wanted
52. Roommates Wanted
54. Apts. for Rent
56. Houses for Rent
57. Rooms for Rent
58. Condos for Rent
59. Condos for Sale
60. Houses for Sale
79. Motorcycles
84. Used Cars for Sale
88. Used Cars Wanted

Month:

AUG.	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.
DEC.	JAN.	FEB.	MAR.
APR.	MAY	JUNE	JULY

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

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BASKETBALL

The bright side of losing

The LBSU men's basketball team uses a brutal schedule to its advantage.

By Oscar Terrones
Sports Editor

Since taking over the Long Beach State men's basketball program in 2007, head coach Dan Monson has put an emphasis on scheduling tough, big-name, out-of-conference opponents.

Though the results haven't always been favorable, there's no doubt in Monson's and his players' minds that playing stronger competition has made them a better team both on and off the court.

"I think we've talked plenty about my philosophy with scheduling games," Monson said. "I think you get a lot out of playing really good competition. Know your weaknesses." Monson said 49ers have consistently had the toughest schedule in the nation throughout the past five years, but their stretch in December was the toughest one they have ever had. That stretch was a six-game road trip, four of which came against Top-25 opponents.

LBSU dropped all six games, five by double digits. The only close result was its loss at San Diego State, a 60-59 defeat in the final minute of the game. Monson doesn't stress too much on the final score; instead, he focuses on how the games helped his team improve.

"I don't think there's any doubt we're a better defensive team then when we started," Monson said. "I don't think there's any doubt we're a better rebounding team. I think we're executing OK offensively. For us to get to where we need to be, I think the biggest thing we've been exposed [to] that we haven't gotten better at is our discipline."

Senior Forward David Samuels said the road trip helped the team learn about their personnel and how to play better with each other. He says the grind of those games was one of his biggest takeaways from the trip.

"The second half [of games]," Samuels said. "I won't say we struggled offensively, but it's more on the defensive end where we're on the opposite side of our bench. We need to grind out those minutes."

Monson said he didn't spend any time worrying about how his four freshmen would respond to the road trip, with most of them never having done that kind of travel or having played that level of competition.

"I think all four of them saw what they can do," Monson said. "And the things they have to work on and that's part of growing."

Forwards Temidayo Yussuf and Jack Williams and Guards Justin Bibbins and Deontae North have each made contributions to the team. Monson said he signed them because he thought they were up to the task and weren't going to be discouraged by a couple of blowout losses.

Michael Ares | Daily 49er

Long Beach State head coach Dan Monson talks to his team during a timeout at the Big West Tournament game against Cal State Northridge on Mar. 14, 2013.

"I'm not letting them off saying 'oh, hey, that was tough,'" Monson said. "I believe in them. I just try to address why we didn't do good enough and move on. I like these four freshmen. I think they're good players. I think they didn't play as well as we wanted them to in the first stretch and I think those games showed them why."

Bibbins admitted that the losing streak was hard on the team, but the benefits have made them better.

"I feel like this trip really bonded us," Bibbins said. "Especially all those road games, hotels, flights. We really got to know each other better and just know what each player can do and pick the spots for each player."

Senior Guard Tyler Lamb praised Monson and the program for scheduling teams that regularly play in the NCAA Tournament.

"I think that's the beauty of this program," Lamb said. "We play a real tough schedule for preseason so we can go into conference with an advantage over the teams in our conference who haven't played those big games and the players who haven't been in those type of games. [The schedule] can either help us a lot or can hurt us depending on how we respond from it."

The results, so far, speak for themselves. Since returning from the road trip, the 49ers are 4-1 with their lone loss coming in overtime at UC Davis.

"Our team, as a group, knows what it has to work on, and I think that's a good thing."

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Continued from page 1

"I know we're going to get zoned a lot," Caffey said. "So we just have to practice on that offensively. We kind of shot badly [against Cal Poly], but we got through it through with defense."

Even a team struggling in conference play presents a challenge. In last Thursday's 50-48 win against Cal Poly (8-8, 3-1), it took an incredible last second effort from Caffey to seal the win.

"[Cal Poly] is a hard-hat defensive team," Caffey said. "We struggle every year scoring against them. Defensively, they drain the clock on offense."

Senior Guard Tyler Lamb said he thinks the league has improved from a quality standpoint since last season. Lamb, the 49ers' second leading scorer at 9.3 points per game, said the first couple of games of league play have given the team a good feel for what they are going to face the rest of the season.

"I think conference has picked up from last year," Lamb said. "It's good competition. We lost to [UC Davis] at Davis for the first time in seven years last weekend. I'm excited to go into conference play and be able to showcase what I can do and what my team can [do] against these other schools."

Lamb said the team's ready to make the Big West Conference Long Beach State's.

"We're excited to restore order back in the Big West Conference," he said.

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